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ABSTRACT

During the 20th century, Asian countries have been very active in publishing books and journals in the field of library and information science. Journals have been published in English as well as in many vernacular languages. This paper deals with the development of Asian library journals, with an emphasis on South Asia. Japan was the first Asian country to publish a library journal, entitled "Toshoken Zasshi," in 1907, followed by India in 1912. In 1972, China became the newest nation to enter the publishing of library journals. Since 1907, many journals have been published from Asia, but many have ceased publication for various reasons. As recently as 1998, a new quarterly journal, entitled "Ranganathan Research Bulletin," started publication in India. This paper discusses the coverage, quality of articles, readership, and subscription rates of various South Asian library journals. It also deals briefly with the success of "Library Times International," edited by the author. Finally, a few suggestions are made to improve quality, circulation and coverage, and to attract readership for all library journals in a timely manner through technology. (Author/MES)

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Development of library and information science periodicals in Asia, with emphasis on South Asia: problems and solutions

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Abstract

During the present century, Asian countries have been very active in publishing books and journals in the field of library and information science. Journals have been published in English as well as in many vernacular languages. This paper deals with the development of Asian library journals, with an emphasis on South Asia. Japan was the first Asian country to publish a library journal, entitled Toshoken Zasshi, in 1907, followed by India in 1912. In 1972 China became the newest and the youngest nation to enter the publishing of library journals. During the last ninety-two years, many journals have been published from Asia, but many have ceased publication, for various reasons. As present, over two hundred journals are published in Asian countries. As recently as 1998, a new quarterly journal, entitled Ranganathan Research Bulletin, started publication in India. The paper discusses the coverage, quality of articles, readership, and subscription rates of various South Asian library journals. It also deals in brief with the success of Library Times International, edited by this author. Finally, a few suggestions are made to improve quality, circulation and coverage, and attract readership for all library journals in a timely manner through technology.

Paper

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have been part of the world, including South Asia, for centuries. Who can forget the

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University of Taxila and Nalanda Libraries which flourished in India during the fifth and seventh century AD respectively? Nalanda University Library was the biggest in Asia during the seventh century and at its peak of reputation and international glory in the ninth century AD. These libraries had thousands of books and even hand-written manuscripts and other types of materials for the benefit of their users, including scholars from many Asian countries. It has not been established whether or not the Asian libraries during the ancient times had periodicals in their collections.

According to various dictionaries, a periodical is "a publication with a distinctive title which appears at stated or regular intervals ..." [1]. The birth of the first periodical took place on January 5, 1665, at Paris, France. On this historic day, the first scientific journal, entitled Journal des Scavans, was published. It was the creation of Denys de Sallo, who was a counsellor of the French Court of Parliament. The first issue of this journal had only twenty pages and included ten short articles, a few letters and notes [2]. It is a well known fact that the field of library and information science is relatively new in the modern world. The first library school in the world, known as the Columbia School of Library Economy, was opened by the late Melvil Dewey in the United States in 1887 at New York [3]. He was also the first editor of the Library Journal, which started publication in 1876 by R.R. Bowker from New York, and is still being published on a regular basis. The growth of journals in all fields of study was slow during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but it picked up rapidly in the second half of the present century, including in the field of library and information science.

"Regardless of the publication medium, serials [periodicals] remain the key tool for scholarship and the primary source of current information and topical news in all fields of endeavor." [4]. According to the 37th edition of Ulrich's International Periodicals* Directory, about 157,173 serials were published in the world during 1998, including 1,600 journals in the field of library and information science and computer applications [5]. These figures include 110 journals published from Asia. According to my research, Asian countries publish over 200 journals in our field in English as well as in vernacular languages. Therefore, the information contained in Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory is not complete. Unfortunately, only 22 Asian titles have been abstracted in Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) [6], published in the UK, and Library Literature, published in New York, has only four titles published from Asia, and two Asian titles published in the UK and USA [7].

Japan took the lead in Asia by publishing in 1907 the first library journal, entitled Toshokan Zasshi, which is still being published on a regular basis. In 1912, India followed by publishing the first Indian library journal in English, entitled Library Miscellany. It was the brain-child of William Borden, an American librarian who was working in Baroda at the time. Unfortunately, Library Miscellany ceased publication in 1920 [8]. In 1916 Iyyanki Venkata Ramanayya started a publication in Telugu, entitled Granthalaya Sarvastvamu, which is still published on a regular basis [9].

China, known for inventing paper and having a long tradition of scholarship going back to 26 BC [10], was behind in publishing library literature. The most populous country in the modern world, China published its first journal in librarianship in 1972 in the Chinese language. The title of this journal is Tushu Gongzuo Tongsum (Book Services Newsletter). At present, 92 journals are published in China, including 62 journals in library science and 30 in information science, the majority in Chinese. In the view of Cheng, "there are 12 excellent journals of library science in China. They are the most representative core journals in library science research in China."[11] During the first half of the present century, about ten library journals were published in Asia. But during the second half, from 1950 to 1999, about 200 new journals started publication, including titles like Herald of Library Science, Pakistan Library Bulletin, and Eastern Librarian. Many good journals such as Modern Librarian and Indian Librarian ceased publication for various reasons, which will be discussed later in the paper. At present, Japan publishes 63 journals but only seven of them are in English

SOUTH ASIA

South Asia has a long history of excellent libraries dating back to the fourth century BC. This area includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

INDIA. The Republic of India is the largest country and occupies the major part of the South Asian region. India has the advantage over other Asian countries in publishing library journals in the English language because it has the largest English-speaking population in the world. It publishes 57 journals in the field of library and information science, a majority of them in English. According to my research, India is the leader in publishing journals in the field but only a handful of them are known and available outside India.

There are a few other good journals published in India, including the Bulletin of ILA (Indian Library Association). It was launched in 1933 when the ILA was formed, but it has changed its title many times. Professor P.N. Kaula started his own journal, entitled Herald of Library Science, in Varanasi in 1962 and it also has been published on a regular basis for the last 37 years. Prof. Kaula edits a few other journals, including International Information, Communication and Education; it is a multi-disciplinary journal, published semi-annually, and was launched in 1982. Granthalaya Vijnona, also published semi-annually, in Hindi, started publication in 1970 [12]. In 1998, Prof. Kaula launched another journal, Ranganathan Research Bulletin: Supplement to the Herald of Library Science. It is the only journal in Asia, rather I should say in the world, that is devoted exclusively to a particular school of thought in the field of library and information science. It seems that it will be an "effective medium to propagate Ranganathan's ideology and his school of thought." [13]. Other notable Indian journals in the field are: IASLIC Bulletin (1956-), International Library Movement (1979-), and Journal of Library and Information Science (1976-). In my view, one of the best Indian journals is Library Science with Slant to Documentation and Information Science. It was started by Ranganathan in 1964, and is a publication of the Sarada Ranganathan Endowment for Library Science in Bangalore. In addition, there are a few journals published in regional languages, including Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu [14].

BANGLADESH. Bangladesh is situated in the northeast corner of the South Asian sub-continent. Before becoming an independent country in 1972, it was part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1972, and part of India until 1947, when the country was divided by the British at the time of independence. Bangladesh publishes only two journals in the field of library and information science. The Eastern Librarian is a publication of the Library Association of Bangladesh and has been published on a regular basis since 1966, though issues do not always appear on time. The last issue of this publication was a combined volume 20-22, published in the spring of 1998. A new journal was launched earlier this year in 1999: Bangladesh Journal of Library and Information Science. In addition, a few newsletters in Bangla are also published in Bangladesh, including Informatics.

BHUTAN is a small country in the Himalayan region between India and Tibet. The development of libraries and librarianship is still very limited. According to my information, no library journals are published from this country.

The *MALDIVES* is the smallest country in the region, south of India. It publishes no library and information science journals.

NEPAL is another small country, which divides India from China on the foothills of the Himalayas. There are no major publications reported in the field of librarianship, with the exception of an annual publication of the National Council for Science and Technology, which deals with libraries in the country.

PAKISTAN was created in 1947, when the British divided India in two regions at the time of independence. It is situated in the northwest of India. Pakistan has "1,500 libraries and 3,000 professional librarians . . . [and] six library schools." [15]. There were no major library

journals in Pakistan until the Pakistan Library Association was founded in 1964. The Pakistan Library Bulletin, a quarterly journal, started publication in Karachi in 1968. At present, there are eleven journals and newsletters published in Pakistan, of which ten are in English and one in Urdu. It is possible that there may be a few journals published in regional languages such as Punjabi and Sindhi, but I am not aware of them.

SRI LANKA is an island to the southeast of the southernmost point of India in Tamil Nadu. It has a good working network of libraries and a few library schools. At present, four library journals are published in Sri Lanka. They are Sri Lanka Library Review, published semi-annually in English, and Journal of University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka, an annual publication in English, and two other quarterlies, which. are trilingual (Sinhalese, Tamil, and English).

A limited number of journals (ranging from one to four) are published in various other Asian countries in both English and regional languages. They include two each in English and Indonesian from Indonesia; one in English and three in Malay/English from Malaysia; four (in English) from the Philippines; three from Singapore; two from Korea; one in English and four from Taiwan (including one in English); two from Thailand; and four from Vietnam [16].

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

It is certainly good to know that Asia produces over 200 journals in the field of library and information science which includes over 70 journals from South Asia. I have been editor of Library Times International since 1984, and associate editor of International Leads since 1996. I have been interested in research, writing, and publishing since my high school days. At present, I read many library journals regularly to enhance my knowledge, and to see the quality of the library journals from an editor's viewpoint. I have examined a majority of South Asian and many other library journals for this paper. From an editor's view, I must say that there are many problems with Asian journals including South Asian journals which need immediate attention.

A majority of library journals in Asia, including South Asian countries, are published quarterly, a few semi-annually, a few yearly, and some even published irregularly. It is very disappointing that many journals do not appear on time. Sometimes a few issues, or even a few volumes, are combined. The editors are to be blamed for this unprofessionalism. They should know the importance of research and timely information needed by scholars, researchers, faculty members, librarians, students, and other users. A journal is a "primary means of scholarly communication . . . [it] offers authors and readers some advantages over the monograph: . . . [including] intensive study of very specific questions or aspects of large problems, and the timely publication of intended communication." [17]. Therefore, all library journals must be published on time for the benefit of interested users and readers.

The invention of printing in 1440 provided a new tool for sharing and communicating thoughts with others in a form which led to the birth of periodicals. Unfortunately, the paper used by a majority of publishers for printing library journals is of very poor quality. It becomes yellow within a few years. Maybe, it is not acid-free, thus shortening the life of paper. Therefore, it is very important to use an acid-free quality paper to preserve the writings of all scholars in every language of Asia including English, and to make microfilm copies of all important library journals.

Many articles in South Asian English-language journals are of very poor quality. First, writers do not make sense and write poor sentences. Many times there is no link between paragraphs. It seems that the editors are desperate to get articles and publish them in their journals without looking at their quality. They need to be edited properly, and good proofreading should be done before the final copy of any journal is approved for printing. Perhaps poor quality of the paper, poor writing and poor editing are the main reasons that these journals are not subscribed to by many libraries, and as a result they have small circulation. Even Ulrich's International

Periodicals Directory does not give circulation figures of many journals published from South Asia and other Asian countries [18].

Many editors have started their own journals in South Asia without proper planning, finances, and marketing. This has resulted in the premature death of many journals. A majority of the editors are part-time, without any proper help, which makes it very difficult to run a quality and profitable business. Even many library associations have part-time editors for their journals. It helps to have full-time staff for those journals and newsletters that appear monthly or more frequently. It is important to include only the best articles on important topics to attract more readers and subscribers. It is always good to have a few referees to read manuscripts and act on their advice. I would like to know how many manuscripts are rejected by editors.

Another problem with a few South Asian journals is that their foreign subscription rates are very high, with the exception of a few journals and newsletters from Sri Lanka, making it very difficult for Western countries to subscribe to them. It seems that editors and/or publishers want to become rich overnight without delivering the product on time and in many cases without the necessary quality in their publications. If the price is right and you have a quality journal, you will certainly attract more subscribers, and you will make more money, if that is your motive. Otherwise, subscription figures will not improve.

Excellent marketing of library journals is the key to success. I have been very active in the field of librarianship for over twenty-five years. During these years, I have not seen any letters or sample copies of journals from any editor or publisher from South Asia. I have not seen any advertisements for Asian journals in publications of South Asia and North America. It is very important to have a good plan to market a library journal. It should be done on a regular basis by advertising in various library journals, direct marketing by sending sample issues to prospective subscribers, distributing free copies to librarians at various regional and national conferences, calling people on the phone, hiring firms to do marketing for you, and even giving discounts to various subscription agencies to market and sell your publication

Another problem with a few publishers is that lost and damaged copies of their journals are never replaced free. Often even authors do not receive free copies of journals and/or offprints of their articles.

Times have changed due to the introduction of technology. Many journals are available in full text on various databases on the Web and on CD-ROM. It helps readers to do research much faster. But I have yet to see a South Asian journal on any North American database on the web and/or on CD-ROM. A majority of good South Asian and other Asian journals in the field of library and information science should be made available electronically as soon as possible for the benefit of researchers and other users. It will help in publicity also.

I have been an advocate of excellent service and quality journals. As editor of Library Times International since 1984, I believe we have succeeded because of our commitment to excellence, good marketing, and assistance from a team of 55 reporters. Our reporters from many countries, including a few from South Asia, send in their reports on a regular basis for every issue, our editors and staff work very hard to gather stories, and we publish each issue on time. We have subscribers in over sixty countries. We have heard only good comments from libraries and librarians. Everything is possible in the world with hard work, determination, and goals, and we know that the sky is the limit.

Not all western journals and newsletters are of top quality, but many of them have succeeded because of their excellent services, and publishing every issue on time with a few exceptions. There are 56 ALA-accredited library schools in Canada and the United States. I conducted a survey of the holdings of Asian library journals in their libraries. Only 32 schools responded by fax, mail, e-mail, and voice mail. Ten schools do not get any library journals from Asia. The University of Hawaii receives 54 journals, followed by the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign (33), and University of Pittsburgh (28). Other schools subscribe to only a few journals. According to deans/librarians of these schools, budget is the main problem for not ordering any journals from Asia. A second reason is that there is no interest in the faculty or students to read these journals. Another reason mentioned was the Asian languages with which their students are not familiar [19]. A few librarians and library educators have even mentioned poor quality of journals, and others mentioned self-promotion by one editor of an Indian library journal. It is unfortunate that a majority of these schools do not offer any courses in Asian librarianship, comparative librarianship, or international librarianship to their students. The American Library Association with its 57,000 members is the largest and the oldest library association (founded in 1876) in the world. It has been advocating "Local Touch and Global Reach." How can it achieve this goal when a majority of the accredited schools in North America do not offer any courses in librarianship in Asia, where over two billion people live, and do not subscribe to Asian journals?

Martin Richardson, Journals Director of Oxford University Press, is of the opinion that "both authors and readers of learned journals are increasingly expecting their publishers to exploit the many advantages of on-line distribution. Important research can be disseminated faster, and relevant material can be found more precisely. But this will not happen if each publisher erects ring fences around their own portfolio of information." [20]. He added, "Clearly, there is a need for a 'one-stop shop' where all the major journals from whatever publishers can be searched and accessed without time-consuming visits to a succession of different websites [or journals] ... [Therefore, we should] maximize the exposure of our authors' research to the global community of academics, researchers, and practicing professionals." [21]. The publishers of Asian, including South Asian, library journals must work together and include their journals on major Website databases. It will give them more publicity, and their material will be used by many interested scholars, researchers, students, and others for their needs. If no action is taken by publishers and editors, they will be left behind in this race on the Information Superhighway of the twenty-first century.

A few more observations from an editor's point of view. As noted earlier, many journals do not appear on time. The same is true of abstracts and indexes. For example, Indian Library Science Abstracts, Guide to Indian Periodicals, and Index India are also published late. All journals, abstracts and indexes should be published on time for the benefit of researchers. All journals should also include an index for each volume and letters to the editor. Publishers may consider including a few advertisements from other publishers, booksellers, vendors, and subscription agencies; this may give their publications more visibility, increase subscriptions, and improve cash flow. Perhaps it is time for commercial publishers to take the responsibility and start publishing a few quality monthly library journals and newsletters in South Asia and other Asian countries. Excellent product and service should be the main concern of all editors and publishers. It will not hurt the editors and publishers to take a few courses in journalism and editing to enhance their knowledge. Even an internship with a leading journal and/or a newspaper would help present and future editors. There are many good books in the market on publishing including a new publication, entitled Journal Publishing [22], which can teach all of us a few important and basic principles of editing and publishing, which in the long run will benefit everyone.

Finally, we must keep in mind that journalism in librarianship covers local, regional, national, and international news and scholarship. Journals will continue to play a major role in dissemination of ... information [23] for a long time because they are indispensable. Therefore, we editors must present our quality publications in such a manner that they will have a positive impact on the field, and help every interested individual in the profession rather than only a few of us. Otherwise, we will not be successful in our efforts to improve the field of library and information science in the third millennium.

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